

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date
14 June 2001 (14.06.2001)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 01/42119 A1

- (51) International Patent Classification: **B65H 45/101**, 21/00
- (21) International Application Number: **PCT/US00/33251**
- (22) International Filing Date: 8 December 2000 (08.12.2000)
- (25) Filing Language: English
- (26) Publication Language: English
- (30) Priority Data:
99124638.0 10 December 1999 (10.12.1999) EP
- (71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): **THE PROCTER & GAMBLE COMPANY [US/US]**; One Procter & Gamble Plaza, Cincinnati, OH 45202 (US).
- (72) Inventors; and
- (75) Inventors/Applicants (for US only): **DZIEZOK, Peter [DE/DE]**; Jahnstrasse 21, 65239 Hochheim (DE). **SCAIFE, Martin [GB/GB]**; Old Oak Farm, Smarden, Ashford, Kent TN27 8PQ (GB).
- (74) Agents: **REED, T., David et al.**; The Procter & Gamble Company, 5299 Spring Grove Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45217-1087 (US).
- (81) Designated States (national): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AT (utility model), AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, CZ (utility model), DE, DE (utility model), DK, DK (utility model), DM, DZ, EE, EE (utility model), ES, FI, FI (utility model), GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SK (utility model), SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW.
- (84) Designated States (regional): ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE, TR), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).
- Published:
- With international search report.
 - Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of receipt of amendments.
- For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

(54) Title: **PROCESS FOR SPLICING THE BOTTOM END PORTION OF THE FIRST STACK OF WEB MATERIAL AND THE TOP END PORTION OF THE SECOND STACK OF THE MATERIAL**

(57) Abstract: The present invention provides a method for splicing a strip of material packaged in stacks arranged parallel to each other. The method comprises a step of reversely rotating the bottom end portion around the transverse edge of the bottom end portion and/or reversely rotating the top end portion around the transverse edge of the bottom end portion until the longitudinal tangential vector of the bottom end portion forms an angle of 90 and 270 degrees with the longitudinal tangential vector of the top end portion.

WO 01/42119 A1

Process for splicing the bottom end portion of the first stack of web material and the top end portion of the second stack of the material

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides an apparatus for splicing a strip of material packaged in stacks arranged parallel to each other.

BACKGROUND

In online manufacturing of articles, materials are often supplied as web materials and subsequently cut into pieces during the manufacturing process. The supply of web materials has the advantage that large quantities of the material can be supplied to the manufacturing process as a single piece of web material. The web material may be supplied as roll stock or in festooned form. The latter form is preferred when the web material has a relatively large thickness dimension such that the lifetime of a roll of this material would be relatively short.

Packages of festooned web material are well known in the art and are described for example in documents US-A-3 729 367 (Shore), EP-A-0 366 038 (Felix), EP-A-0 383 501 (Foster).

There have also been described, see for example WO-A-98/58864 (O'Connor et al.), packages of festooned web material in which a plurality of stacks of the material has been arranged in side-by-side fashion such that by splicing the end of one that to the beginning of the neighboring stack one continuous strip of web material can be obtained. The slices, however, had to be carried out by hand in particular because the arrangement of the stacks requires that one of the into pieces is twisted by an annual 360 degrees around the longitudinal dimension of the web material.

Therefore, it has been an object of the present invention to provide an apparatus and a process for automatic splicing of neighboring stacks of festooned web material.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The process of the present invention allows splicing of parallel stacks of web material with increased speed and increased accuracy compared to splicing by hand.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a method for splicing the end connecting portion of a first stack in a multi-lane festooned package of web material to the beginning portion of the second stack of web material within the same package.

The term "web material" as used herein refers to a sheet-like material, or to a composite or laminate comprising two or more sheet-like materials. For example, a web material can be a fibrous web, a non-fibrous web, a woven web, a nonwoven web, a foam, a film, or the like. The web material has a longitudinal dimension, a transverse dimension, and a thickness dimension. The longitudinal dimension of the material is substantially larger than the transverse dimension and than the thickness dimension. Typically, the material is supplied to the manufacturing process along the longitudinal dimension. Accordingly, the material is ideally rendered virtually infinite in the longitudinal dimension by splicing together a plurality of stretches of web material. By cutting the web material perpendicular to the longitudinal dimension, pieces of the material suitable for incorporation into the article manufacture are obtained. Typically, the pieces of material which are incorporated into the article manufacture have the same transverse dimension and thickness dimension as the web material. Due to the sheet like nature of the web material, the thickness dimension is typically smaller than the thickness dimension.

The term "multi-lane festooned package of web material" as used herein refers to a plurality of stacks of web material which are arranged in parallel. Within the individual

stacks, the material is folded in a zigzag fashion and extends continuously from a bottom end portion to a top end portion where the material is folded at lines substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal dimension of the web material. The individual stacks of the multilane festooned package may be completely independent of each other or the individual stacks may be separated from each other by a perforation line. If the individual stacks are only separated by a perforation line, the overall stability of the package is increased. Examples for multi-lane festooned packages of web material can be found in documents US-A-3 729 367 (stacks separated by perforation) and WO-A-98/58864 (individual stacks), both documents being incorporated herein by reference. For the purpose of the present invention, a Cartesian coordinate system is defined relative to the multilane festooned package of web material which is to be spliced by the process of the present invention. The x -- dimension of this coordinate system is defined to be substantially parallel to the fold lines of the material within the individual stacks, i.e. the side surfaces of the individual stacks are perpendicular to the x -- direction. The y -- dimension is defined to be substantially parallel to the longitudinal dimension of the web material in between the folds. Accordingly, the z -- dimension is defined to be height dimension of the individual stacks, i.e. the z -- dimension is perpendicular to the major surface of the web material in between the folds.

For example, multi-lane festooned packages of material are particularly useful in the manufacture of disposable articles, in particular disposable absorbent articles such as diapers, sanitary napkins, adult incontinence products, bed mats, bibs, and the like.

To be able to provide a long-lasting supply of web material to the process of manufacture, it is desirable to connect the different stacks of the material by splicing the bottom end portion of one stack to the top end portion of the neighboring stack or any other stack. As is readily apparent to the skilled person, such a splice requires a 360 ° twist around the longitudinal dimension of one of the end portions to be connected. This is particularly true for two sided web materials, i.e. for those materials which have a first major surface which is different from the second major surface.

The process of the present invention comprises a step of holding the bottom end

portion of the first stack of web material. The process further comprises a step of holding the top end portion of the second stack of web material. Optionally, the process of the present invention may comprise stacks of automatically locating and grabbing the bottom end portion and/or the top end portion from the multilane festooned package of web material. In case the individual stacks of the package are separated by lines of perforation, the process of the present invention may further comprise steps of separating the bottom end portion and/or top end portion from a neighboring bottom end portion or top end portion respectively. In case material has to be separated by tearing open a perforation, the quality of the perforation may be checked automatically while performing the splice.

After holding the bottom end portion of the first stack of web material and after holding the top end portion of the second stack of web material, the process of the present invention comprises a further step of reversely rotating the bottom end portion around its transverse edge and/or reversely rotating the top end portion around its transverse edge until the longitudinal tangential vector of the bottom end portion forms an angle of between 90° and 270° , preferably between 120° and 240° , more preferably between 150° and 210° , most preferably about 180° with the longitudinal tangential vector of the top end portion. The longitudinal tangential vector of the end portions are considered to be tangential to the major surface of the web material in a longitudinal direction pointing away from the respective end portion. The term "reverse rotation" as used herein refers to that rotation which turns the inner major surface of the respective end portion to the outside. In this context, the inner major surface of the respective end portion is defined to be that major surface which faces the remainder of the stack of web material to which the end portion belongs. As has surprisingly been found, the step of reversely rotating in the bottom end portion and/or the top end portion and the subsequent joining of the two end portions yields the 360° twist around the longitudinal dimension of the web material required for continuous de-festooning.

Subsequent to the reverse rotation of the bottom end portion and/or the top end portion, the process of the present invention comprises a step of joining the bottom end portion to the top end portion. A wide variety of suitable joining processes are known in

the art including but not limited to ultrasonic bonding, adhesive bonding, thermobonding, pressure bonding, sewing, and the like. The process of ultrasonic bonding is particularly preferred for its low impact on to the web material. Depending on the specific material properties of the web material, however, the most suitable joining process will be readily apparent to the skilled person. The step of joining also comprises the relative positioning of the bottom end portion and the top end portion to be accessible for splicing. During such positioning care has to be taken to not entangle the bottom end portion with the top end portion. Movements of at least one of the end portions in the respective transverse direction may assist in resolving potential entanglement problems. For the joining of the bottom end portion to the top end portion, the bottom end portion and the top end portion may be positioned relative to each other such that the bottom end portion is on top of and overlapping the top end portion. Alternatively, the bottom end portion of the top end portion may be arranged prior to joining such that to transverse edges contact each other so that the two end portions are joined in non-overlapping fashion. Optionally, an additional piece of material may be joined to the two end portions of support such a non-overlapping splice.

The process of the present invention optionally comprises a step of positioning the transverse edge of the bottom end portion and the transverse edge of the top end portion such that both edges are substantially parallel to each other prior to joining the bottom end portion to the top end portion. Such arrangement of the end portions will contribute to the quality of the splices.

Whist in the present description, only the consecutive splicing of a plurality of neighboring has been described, the concept of the process of the present invention may also be applied to simultaneous splicing of a plurality of bottom end portion to the respective top end portion or vice versa. Such a simultaneous process is also considered to form part of the present invention.

It is considered that the construction of an apparatus to carry out the process of the present invention lies within the customary practice of the person skilled in the art. It is further considered that the deployment of servo motors which may be controlled by a computer program in combination with sensors, in particular optical sensors, is beneficial for the construction of such an apparatus.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A process for splicing the bottom end portion of a web material in a first stack to a top end portion of a web material in a second stack, said process comprising the following steps
 - providing a first stack of web material
 - providing a second stack of web material
 - arranging said second stack parallel to said first stack
 - holding said bottom end portion of said first stack of web material
 - holding said top end portion of said second stack of web material
 - reversely rotating said bottom end portion around the transverse edge of said bottom end portion and/or reversely rotating said top end portion around the transverse edge of said bottom end portion until the longitudinal tangential vector of the bottom end portion forms an angle of 90 and 270 degrees with the longitudinal tangential vector of the top end portion
 - joining said bottom end portion to said top end portion
2. A process according to claim 1 wherein said process further comprises the step of automatically locating and grabbing said bottom end portion.
3. A process according to claim 2 wherein said process further comprises a step of separating said bottom end portion from a second bottom end portion by tearing a perforation line.
4. A process according to claim 1 wherein said process further comprises the step of automatically locating and grabbing said top end portion.

5. A process according to claim 4
wherein
said process further comprises a step of separating said top end portion from a second top end portion by tearing a perforation line.
6. A process according to claim 1
wherein
said process further comprises a step of positioning the transverse edge of said bottom end portion and the transverse edge of the top end portion such that both edges are substantially parallel prior to joining said bottom end portion to said top end portion.
7. A process according to claim 1
wherein
said bottom end portion and said top end portion are positioned relative to each other such that said bottom end portion is on top of and overlapping said top end portion prior to joining said bottom end portion to said top end portion.
8. A process according to claim 1
wherein
said bottom end portion is joined to said top end portion by means of ultrasonic bonding.
9. A process according to claim 1
wherein
said first stack of web material and said second stack of web material are comprised in the same multilane festooned package of web material.
10. A process according to claim 1
wherein
said web material is a nonwoven material, preferably a highloft nonwoven material.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No.

PCT/US 00/33251

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 7 B65H45/101 B65H21/00

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 7 B65H B65D

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	WO 98 58864 A (STAC PAC TECHNOLOGIES INC.) 30 December 1998 (1998-12-30) cited in the application page 9, paragraph 3 -page 10, paragraph 3; figure 2	1
A	EP 0 763 491 A (INTOUCH MARKETING SERVICES, INC.) 19 March 1997 (1997-03-19) column 3, line 47 -column 4, line 20 column 6, line 39 -column 7, line 20; figures	1
A	EP 0 383 501 A (ALMEX CONTROL SYSTEMS LTD) 22 August 1990 (1990-08-22) cited in the application column 2, line 36 -column 4, line 11; figures	1



Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.



Patent family members are listed in annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :

- *A* document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
- *E* earlier document but published on or after the international filing date
- *L* document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)
- *O* document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means
- *P* document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

T later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

X document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

Y document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.

& document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

17 May 2001

Date of mailing of the international search report

25/05/2001

Name and mailing address of the ISA

European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2
NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk
Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl.
Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016

Authorized officer

Raven, P

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

PCT/US 00/33251

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
WO 9858864 A	30-12-1998	US 6035608 A	14-03-2000
		US 5927051 A	27-07-1999
		US 5966905 A	19-10-1999
		US 6067775 A	30-05-2000
		US 6009689 A	04-01-2000
		US 6176068 B	23-01-2001
		US 5987851 A	23-11-1999
		AT 192117 T	15-05-2000
		AU 7902898 A	04-01-1999
		BR 9810162 A	08-08-2000
		CN 1260760 T	19-07-2000
		DE 19881126 T	23-09-1999
		DE 29823583 U	07-10-1999
		DE 29823901 U	31-08-2000
		DE 69800128 D	31-05-2000
		DE 69800128 T	14-12-2000
		DK 910542 T	25-09-2000
		EP 0910542 A	28-04-1999
		ES 2148007 T	01-10-2000
		NO 996293 A	17-12-1999
		PL 337160 A	31-07-2000
		PT 910542 T	31-10-2000
		TR 9903129 T	21-08-2000
		US 5956926 A	28-09-1999
		AU 3923599 A	06-12-1999
		WO 9959907 A	25-11-1999
EP 0763491 A	19-03-1997	US 5658638 A	19-08-1997
		DE 69604254 D	21-10-1999
		DE 69604254 T	23-03-2000
		DE 763491 T	25-02-1999
		DK 763491 T	03-04-2000
		ES 2139263 T	01-02-2000
EP 0383501 A	22-08-1990	US 5962105 A	05-10-1999
		GB 2227994 A	15-08-1990
		US 5036977 A	06-08-1991